



8- Primary Research: Interviews,



Student Sheet

Activity 26: People, Email and Phone

Talking with people can be very valuable when researching. People, particularly experts in the topic you are researching, can:

- explain their actual experiences of your topic. (This is called a primary source because they have actually done it, or seen it and experienced it!)
- offer information and advice about where to find more information.

The amount of information and help you get from people will depend partly on how YOU ask them. Most people, when asked nicely, are willing to help or to tell you someone else who could help. When contacting people outside your school it is usually a good idea to let your teacher know beforehand. Ask your teacher if there is a particular way that you should approach an outside person for information. Your school may have a policy.

When contacting people it is really important to remember that you are likely to be dealing with strangers. Most people are very willing to be helpful. However, to be on the safe side:

- Don't give your surname, your first name will do. If they ask for a full name, check with your teacher. If they want to send you information have them send it to the school directly, care of your teacher.
- Don't give them personal details like your home address, unless you have asked your parents.
- If someone is making you uncomfortable end the contact politely but quickly and tell your teacher.

Have a look at this email. Can you spot three things that Kate has done wrong?

Hi,
I am doing a research study about volcanoes. I want you to send me some stuff about what you saw when you went to that eruption. I need it by next week.
My home address is: 134/56 Cheeky Street, Silliville, Rude. 7090.
Kate.

Things Kate should not have done...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Here is Jane's email. Is it better? Can you improve it even more?

Dear Dr Lava,
My name is Jane and I am studying volcanoes. I am in Year 8. I have read about your experience in the eruption on White Island last year and would be really interested in knowing more about what happened.
I would really appreciate any information you could give me or any photos that you could send. I know you are busy and hope that this request won't take up too much of your time.
My address at school is: Jane c/o Mrs Ball, Wise Intermediate, Politeville.
Thanks very much for your time.
Jane



Activity 27: Face-to-face Interviewing

If your expert is willing to be interviewed there are a number of things to bear in mind:

Interview Tips:

1. Be polite and friendly (in writing and face-to-face) this will help them and you feel at ease.
2. Before you meet them, make sure you've worked out the key questions that you need answers to or would like to know more about.
3. Ask your questions with enough time between each so that they have time to think and answer. Some of the best information comes from what people say when they've paused, had a think and start talking again.
4. Practise your interview beforehand so that you have an idea about how your questions sound. A teacher or parent might take you through the questions, and give you some tips.
5. How will you record the interview? On a tape recorder (make sure it works!) or through taking notes?
6. Start off by telling the person what you are researching, why, how they can help and the type of information you want. This will help them think about what they might be able to tell you.
7. Let your interviewee talk. Remember that your job is to LISTEN to what they say so that the next question you can ask is actually relevant or meaningful.

Here is a transcript (everything said written down) of some of Todd's interview with Mr Collins. Tick next to anything that shows a good interview skill.

Todd	Interview with Mr Collins	30/3/07
The Depression		
Good Morning Mr Collins. Thank you so much for coming to help me to find out about what life was like for children in the Depression of the 1930s.		
<i>Lovely to meet you son. It's a pleasure to be able to help.</i>		
Would you like to come and sit down?		
<i>Thanks. My old legs just don't take as much walking as they used to.</i>		
Did you used to do a lot of walking?		
<i>I used to love a good walk. Of course during the Depression there wasn't any choice about it. No petrol so you couldn't drive anywhere, no spare parts so if your bike broke you couldn't fix it, no horses... we had a horse you know, used to keep it in the paddock out the back of our house but after a couple of years of no money and no food... well I guess some poor people just didn't care what they ate.</i>		
That sounds horrible!		
<i>Oh, Yes. They were very hard times for some people.</i>		
...pause...		
What do you remember most about that time?		
<i>Hmmm... Probably the wonderful treat it was when we had butter for the bread at breakfast. And the way Mother would sometimes let us have the day off school to go out to the bush and trap rabbits. They were great days! Roast rabbit and tea made over a fire for dinner. Made me feel as rich as the King to have a rabbit to roast!</i>		

Compare what you thought Todd did well with what your friends thought he did well.

Now, look over your focus question and your sub questions (from task 6).

- What sub questions could be helped by an 'expert opinion'?

- Who could you ask?

- How could you contact them? (phone, email, face to face?)
